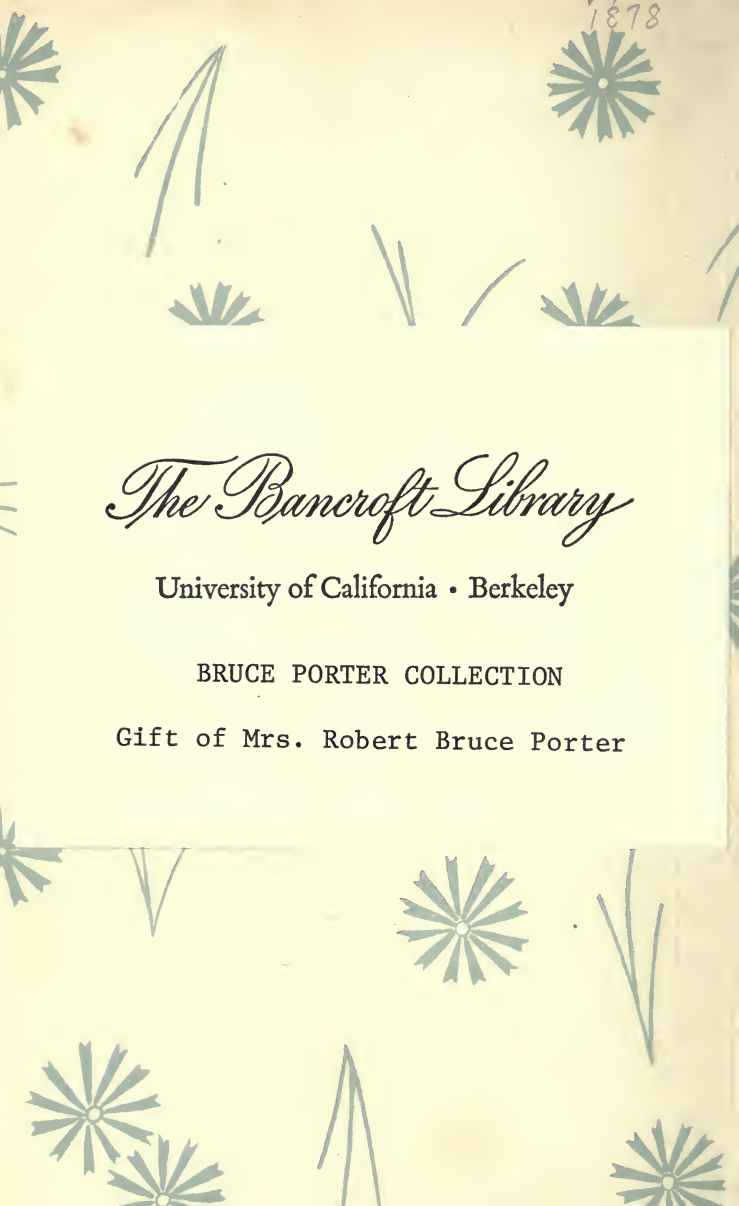
The Vision of Echard

and other Poems

John G. Whittier

1878



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Alice H. James.

from her friend

John G. Whittier.

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THE

VISION OF ECHARD

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
The Vision of Echard	5
The Witch of Wenham	20
Sunset on the Bearcamp	38
The Seeking of the Waterfall	44
June on the Merrimac	53
Hymn of the Dunkers	62
In the Old South	66
Lexington	70
Centennial Hymn	74
Thiers	77
Fitz-Greene Halleck	79
William Francis Bartlett	84
The Two Angels	88

THE LIBRARY 92

THE HENCHMAN 95

KING SOLOMON AND THE ANTS 99

RED RIDING HOOD 104

THE PRESSED GENTIAN 108

OVERRULED 111

HYMN 113

GIVING AND TAKING 115

I WAS A STRANGER, AND YE TOOK ME IN 117

AT SCHOOL-CLOSE 120

AT EVENTIDE 125

THE PROBLEM 127

RESPONSE 130

THE VISION OF ECHARD.

The Benedictine Echard
Sat, worn by wanderings far,
Where Marsberg sees the bridal
Of the Moselle and Sarre.

Fair with its sloping vineyards
And tawny chestnut bloom,
The happy vale Ausonius sung
For holy Treves made room.

On the shrine Helena builded
To keep the Christ coat well,

On minster tower and kloster cross,
The westering sunshine fell.

There, where the rock-hewn circles
O'erlooked the Roman's game,
The veil of sleep fell on him,
And his thought a dream became.

He felt the heart of silence
Throb with a soundless word,
And by the inward ear alone
A spirit's voice he heard.

And the spoken word seemed written
On air and wave and sod,
And the bending walls of sapphire
Blazed with the thought of God:

"What lack I, O my children?
All things are in my hand;
The vast earth and the awful stars
I hold as grains of sand.

"Need I your alms? The silver
And gold are mine alone;
The gifts ye bring before me
Were evermore my own.

"Heed I the noise of viols,
Your pomp of masque and show?
Have I not dawns and sunsets?
Have I not winds that blow?

"Do I smell your gums of incense?
Is my ear with chantings fed?

Taste I your wine of worship,
Or eat your holy bread?

"Of rank and name and honors
Am I vain as ye are vain?
What can Eternal Fullness
From your lip-service gain?

"Ye make me not your debtor
Who serve yourselves alone;
Ye boast to me of homage
Whose gain is all your own.

"For you I gave the prophets,
For you the Psalmist's lay;
For you the law's stone tables,
And holy book and day.

" Ye change to weary burdens
The helps that should uplift;
Ye lose in form the spirit,
The Giver in the gift.

" Who called ye to self-torment,
To fast and penance vain?
Dream ye Eternal Goodness
Has joy in mortal pain?

" For the death in life of Nitria,
For your Chartreuse ever dumb,
What better is the neighbor,
Or happier the home?

" Who counts his brother's welfare
As sacred as his own,

And loves, forgives, and pities,
He serveth me alone.

"I note each gracious purpose,
Each kindly word and deed;
Are ye not all my children?
Shall not the Father heed?

"No prayer for light and guidance
Is lost upon mine ear:
The child's cry in the darkness
Shall not the Father hear?

"I loathe your wrangling councils,
I tread upon your creeds;
Who made ye mine avengers,
Or told ye of my needs?

"I bless men and ye curse them,
I love them and ye hate;
Ye bite and tear each other,
I suffer long and wait.

"Ye bow to ghastly symbols,
To cross and scourge and thorn;
Ye seek his Syrian manger
Who in the heart is born.

"For the dead Christ, not the living,
Ye watch his empty grave
Whose life alone within you
Has power to bless and save.

"O blind ones, outward groping,
The idle quest forego;

Who listens to his inward voice
Alone of him shall know.

"His love all love exceeding
The heart must needs recall,
Its self-surrendering freedom,
Its loss that gaineth all.

"Climb not the holy mountains,
Their eagles know not me;
Seek not the Blessed Islands,
I dwell not in the sea.

"The gods are gone forever
From Zanskar's glacier sides,
And in the Buddha's footprints
The Ceylon serpent glides.

"No more from shaded Delphos
The weird responses come;
Dodona's oaks are silent,
The Hebrew Bath-Col dumb!

"No more from rocky Horeb
The smitten waters gush;
Fallen is Bethel's ladder,
Quenched is the burning bush.

"The jewels of the Urim
And Thummim all are dim;
The fire has left the altar,
The sign the teraphim.

"No more in ark or hill grove
The Holiest abides;

Not in the scroll's dead letter
The eternal secret hides.

"The eye shall fail that searches
For me the hollow sky;
The far is even as the near,
The low is as the high.

"What if the earth is hiding
Her old faiths, long outworn?
What is it to the changeless truth
That yours shall fail in turn?

"What if the o'erturned altar
Lays bare the ancient lie?
What if the dreams and legends
Of the world's childhood die?

"Have ye not still my witness
Within yourselves alway,
My hand that on the keys of life
For bliss or bale I lay?

"Still, in perpetual judgment,
I hold assize within,
With sure reward of holiness,
And dread rebuke of sin.

"A light, a guide, a warning,
A presence ever near,
Through the deep silence of the flesh
I reach the inward ear.

"My Gerizim and Ebal
Are in each human soul,

The still, small voice of blessing,
And Sinai's thunder-roll.

"The stern behest of duty,
The doom-book open thrown,
The heaven ye seek, the hell ye fear,
Are with yourselves alone."

A gold and purple sunset
Flowed down the broad Moselle;
On hills of vine and meadow lands
The peace of twilight fell.

A slow, cool wind of evening
Blew over leaf and bloom;
And, faint and far, the Angelus
Rang from Saint Matthew's tomb.

Then up rose Master Echard,
And marveled: "Can it be
That here, in dream and vision,
The Lord hath talked with me?"

He went his way; behind him
The shrines of saintly dead,
The holy coat and nail of cross,
He left unvisited.

He sought the vale of Eltzbach
His burdened soul to free,
Where the foot-hills of the Eifel
Are glassed in Laachersee.

And, in his Order's kloster,
He sat, in night-long parle,

With Tauler of the Friends of God,
And Nicolas of Basle.

And lo! the twain made answer:
"Yea, brother, even thus
The Voice above all voices
Hath spoken unto us.

"The world will have its idols,
And flesh and sense their sign;
But the blinded eyes shall open,
And the gross ear be fine.

"What if the vision tarry?
God's time is always best;
The true Light shall be witnessed,
The Christ within confessed.

"In mercy or in judgment
He shall turn and overturn,
Till the heart shall be his temple
Where all of Him shall learn."

THE WITCH OF WENHAM.

I.

Along Crane River's sunny slopes
Blew warm the winds of May,
And over Naumkeag's ancient oaks
The green outgrew the gray.

The grass was green on Rial-side,
The early birds at will
Waked up the violet in its dell,
The wind-flower on its hill.

"Where go you, in your Sunday coat?
Son Andrew, tell me, pray."

"For stripèd perch in Wenham Lake
I go to fish to-day."

"Unharmed of thee in Wenham Lake
The mottled perch shall be:
A blue-eyed witch sits on the bank
And weaves her net for thee.

"She weaves her golden hair; she sings
Her spell-song low and faint;
The wickedest witch in Salem jail
Is to that girl a saint."

"Nay, mother, hold thy cruel tongue;
God knows," the young man cried,
"He never made a whiter soul
Than hers by Wenham side.

"She tends her mother sick and blind,
And every want supplies;
To her above the blessed Book
She lends her soft blue eyes.

"Her voice is glad with holy songs,
Her lips are sweet with prayer;
Go where you will, in ten miles round
Is none more good and fair."

"Son Andrew, for the love of God
And of thy mother, stay!"
She clasped her hands, she wept aloud,
But Andrew rode away.

"O reverend sir, my Andrew's soul
The Wenham witch has caught;

She holds him with the curlèd gold
Whereof her snare is wrought.

"She charms him with her great blue eyes,
She binds him with her hair;
Oh, break the spell with holy words,
Unbind him with a prayer!"

"Take heart," the painful preacher said,
"This mischief shall not be;
The witch shall perish in her sins
And Andrew shall go free.

"Our poor Ann Putnam testifies
She saw her weave a spell,
Bare-armed, loose-haired, at full of moon,
Around a dried-up well.

"'Spring up, O well!' she softly sang
The Hebrew's old refrain
(For Satan uses Bible words),
Till water flowed amain.

"And many a goodwife heard her speak
By Wenham water words
That made the buttercups take wings
And turn to yellow birds.

"They say that swarming wild bees seek
The hive at her command;
And fishes swim to take their food
From out her dainty hand.

"Meek as she sits in meeting-time,
The godly minister

Notes well the spell that doth compel
The young men's eyes to her.

"The mole upon her dimpled chin
Is Satan's seal and sign;
Her lips are red with evil bread
And stain of unblest wine.

"For Tituba, my Indian, saith
At Quasycung she took
The Black Man's godless sacrament
And signed his dreadful book.

"Last night my sore-afflicted child
Against the young witch cried.
To take her Marshal Herrick rides
Even now to Wenham side."

The marshal in his saddle sat,
His daughter at his knee;
"I go to fetch that arrant witch,
Thy fair playmate," quoth he.

"Her spectre walks the parsonage,
And haunts both hall and stair;
They know her by the great blue eyes
And floating gold of hair."

"They lie, they lie, my father dear!
No foul old witch is she,
But sweet and good and crystal-pure
As Wenham waters be."

"I tell thee, child, the Lord hath set
Before us good and ill,

And woe to all whose carnal loves
Oppose his righteous will.

"Between Him and the powers of hell
Choose thou, my child, to-day:
No sparing hand, no pitying eye,
When God commands to slay!"

He went his way; the old wives shook
With fear as he drew nigh;
The children in the dooryards held
Their breath as he passed by.

Too well they knew the gaunt gray horse
The grim witch-hunter rode —
The pale Apocalyptic beast
By grisly Death bestrode.

II.

Oh, fair the face of Wenham Lake
Upon the young girl's shone,
Her tender mouth, her dreaming eyes,
Her yellow hair outblown.

By happy youth and love attuned
To natural harmonies,
The singing birds, the whispering wind,
She sat beneath the trees.

Sat shaping for her bridal dress
Her mother's wedding gown,
When lo! the marshal, writ in hand,
From Alford hill rode down.

His face was hard with cruel fear,
He grasped the maiden's hands:
"Come with me unto Salem town,
For so the law commands!"

"Oh, let me to my mother say
Farewell before I go!"
He closer tied her little hands
Unto his saddle bow.

"Unhand me," cried she piteously,
"For thy sweet daughter's sake."
"I 'll keep my daughter safe," he said,
"From the witch of Wenham Lake."

"Oh, leave me for my mother's sake,
She needs my eyes to see."

"Those eyes, young witch, the crows shall peck
From off the gallows-tree."

He bore her to a farm-house old,
And up its stairway long,
And closed on her the garret-door
With iron bolted strong.

The day died out, the night came down;
Her evening prayer she said,
While, through the dark, strange faces seemed
To mock her as she prayed.

The present horror deepened all
The fears her childhood knew;
The awe wherewith the air was filled
With every breath she drew.

And could it be, she trembling asked,
Some secret thought or sin
Had shut good angels from her heart
And let the bad ones in?

Had she in some forgotten dream
Let go her hold on Heaven,
And sold herself unwittingly
To spirits unforgiven?

Oh, weird and still the dark hours passed;
No human sound she heard,
But up and down the chimney stack
The swallows moaned and stirred.

And o'er her, with a dread surmise
Of evil sight and sound,

The blind bats on their leathern wings
Went wheeling round and round.

Low hanging in the midnight sky
Looked in a half-faced moon.
Was it a dream, or did she hear
Her lover's whistled tune?

She forced the oaken scuttle back;
A whisper reached her ear:
"Slide down the roof to me," it said,
"So softly none may hear."

She slid along the sloping roof
Till from its eaves she hung,
And felt the loosened shingles yield
To which her fingers clung.

Below, her lover stretched his hands
And touched her feet so small;
"Drop down to me, dear heart," he said,
"My arms shall break the fall."

He set her on his pillion soft,
Her arms about him twined;
And, noiseless as if velvet-shod,
They left the house behind.

But when they reached the open way,
Full free the rein he cast;
Oh, never through the mirk midnight
Rode man and maid more fast.

Along the wild wood-paths they sped,
The bridgeless streams they swam;

At set of moon they passed the Bass,
At sunrise Agawam.

At high noon on the Merrimac
The ancient ferryman
Forgot, at times, his idle oars,
So fair a freight to scan.

And when from off his grounded boat
He saw them mount and ride,
"God keep her from the evil eye,
And harm of witch!" he cried.

The maiden laughed, as youth will laugh
At all its fears gone by;
"He does not know," she whispered low,
"A little witch am I."

All day he urged his weary horse,
And, in the red sundown,
Drew rein before a friendly door
In distant Berwick town.

A fellow-feeling for the wronged
The Quaker people felt;
And safe beside their kindly hearths
The hunted maiden dwelt,

Until from off its breast the land
The haunting horror threw,
And hatred, born of ghastly dreams,
To shame and pity grew.

Sad were the year's spring morns, and sad
Its golden summer day,

But blithe and glad its withered fields,
And skies of ashen gray;

For spell and charm had power no more,
The spectres ceased to roam,
And scattered households knelt again
Around the hearths of home.

And when once more by Beaver Dam
The meadow-lark outsang,
And once again on all the hills
The early violets sprang,

And all the windy pasture slopes
Lay green within the arms
Of creeks that bore the salted sea
To pleasant inland farms,

The smith filed off the chains he forged,
The jail-bolts backward fell ;
And youth and hoary age came forth
Like souls escaped from hell.

SUNSET ON THE BEARCAMP.

A GOLD fringe on the purpling hem
Of hills the river runs,
As down its long, green valley falls
The last of summer's suns.
Along its tawny gravel-bed
Broad-flowing, swift, and still,
As if its meadow levels felt
The hurry of the hill,
Noiseless between its banks of green
From curve to curve it slips;
The drowsy maple-shadows rest
Like fingers on its lips.

A waif from Carroll's wildest hills,
Unstoried and unknown;
The ursine legend of its name
Prowls on its banks alone.
Yet flowers as fair its slopes adorn
As ever Yarrow knew,
Or, under rainy Irish skies,
By Spenser's Mulla grew;
And through the gaps of leaning trees
Its mountain cradle shows:
The gold against the amethyst,
The green against the rose.

Touched by a light that hath no name,
A glory never sung,
Aloft on sky and mountain wall
Are God's great pictures hung.

How changed the summits vast and old!
No longer granite-browed,
They melt in rosy mist; the rock
Is softer than the cloud;
The valley holds its breath; no leaf
Of all its elms is twirled:
The silence of eternity
Seems falling on the world.

The pause before the breaking seals
Of mystery is this;
Yon miracle-play of night and day
Makes dumb its witnesses.
What unseen altar crowns the hills
That reach up stair on stair?
What eyes look through, what white wings fan
These purple veils of air?

What Presence from the heavenly heights
To those of earth stoops down?
Not vainly Hellas dreamed of gods
On Ida's snowy crown!

Slow fades the vision of the sky,
The golden water pales,
And over all the valley-land
A gray-winged vapor sails.
I go the common way of all;
The sunset fires will burn,
The flowers will blow, the river flow,
When I no more return.
No whisper from the mountain pine
Nor lapsing stream shall tell
The stranger, treading where I tread,
Of him who loved them well.

But beauty seen is never lost,
God's colors all are fast;
The glory of this sunset heaven
Into my soul has passed, —
A sense of gladness unconfined
To mortal date or clime;
As the soul liveth, it shall live
Beyond the years of time.
Beside the mystic asphodels
Shall bloom the home-born flowers,
And new horizons flush and glow
With sunset hues of ours.

Farewell! these smiling hills must wear
Too soon their wintry frown,
And snow-cold winds from off them shake
The maple's red leaves down.

But I shall see a summer sun
Still setting broad and low;
The mountain slopes shall blush and bloom,
The golden water flow.
A lover's claim is mine on all
I see to have and hold, —
The rose-light of perpetual hills,
And sunsets never cold!

THE SEEKING OF THE WATERFALL.

They left their home of summer ease
Beneath the lowland's sheltering trees,
To seek, by ways unknown to all,
The promise of the waterfall.

Some vague, faint rumor to the vale
Had crept — perchance a hunter's tale —
Of its wild mirth of waters lost
On the dark woods through which it tossed.

Somewhere it laughed and sang ; somewhere
Whirled in mad dance its misty hair ;

But who had raised its veil, or seen
The rainbow skirts of that Undine?

They sought it where the mountain brook
Its swift way to the valley took;
Along the rugged slope they clomb,
Their guide a thread of sound and foam.

Height after height they slowly won;
The fiery javelins of the sun
Smote the bare ledge; the tangled shade
With rock and vine their steps delayed.

But, through leaf-openings, now and then
They saw the cheerful homes of men,
And the great mountains with their wall
Of misty purple girdling all.

The leaves through which the glad winds blew
Shared the wild dance the waters knew;
And where the shadows deepest fell
The wood-thrush rang his silver bell.

Fringing the stream, at every turn
Swung low the waving fronds of fern;
From stony cleft and mossy sod
Pale asters sprang, and golden-rod.

And still the water sang the sweet,
Glad song that stirred its gliding feet,
And found in rock and root the keys
Of its beguiling melodies.

Beyond, above, its signals flew
Of tossing foam the birch-trees through;

Now seen, now lost, but baffling still
The weary seekers' slackening will.

Each called to each: "Lo here! Lo there!
Its white scarf flutters in the air!"
They climbed anew; the vision fled,
To beckon higher overhead.

So toiled they up the mountain-slope
With faint and ever fainter hope;
With faint and fainter voice the brook
Still bade them listen, pause, and look.

Meanwhile below the day was done;
Above the tall peaks saw the sun
Sink, beam-shorn, to its misty set
Behind the hills of violet.

"Here ends our quest!" the seekers cried,
"The brook and rumor both have lied!
The phantom of a waterfall
Has led us at its beck and call."

But one, with years grown wiser, said:
"So, always baffled, not misled,
We follow where before us runs
The vision of the shining ones.

"Not where they seem their signals fly,
Their voices while we listen die;
We cannot keep, however fleet,
The quick time of their winged feet.

"From youth to age unresting stray
These kindly mockers in our way;

Yet lead they not, the baffling elves,
To something better than themselves?

"Here, though unreached the goal we sought,
Its own reward our toil has brought:
The winding water's sounding rush,
The long note of the hermit thrush,

"The turquoise lakes, the glimpse of pond
And river track, and, vast, beyond
Broad meadows belted round with pines,
The grand uplift of mountain lines!

"What matter though we seek with pain
The garden of the gods in vain,
If lured thereby we climb to greet
Some wayside blossom Eden-sweet?

"To seek is better than to gain,
The fond hope dies as we attain;
Life's fairest things are those which seem,
The best is that of which we dream.

"Then let us trust our waterfall
Still flashes down its rocky wall,
With rainbow crescent curved across
Its sunlit spray from moss to moss.

"And we, forgetful of our pain,
In thought shall seek it oft again;
Shall see this aster-blossomed sod,
This sunshine of the golden-rod,

"And haply gain, through parting boughs,
Grand glimpses of great mountain brows

Cloud-turbaned, and the sharp steel sheen
Of lakes deep set in valleys green.

"So failure wins; the consequence
Of loss becomes its recompense;
And evermore the end shall tell
The unreached ideal guided well.

"Our sweet illusions only die
Fulfilling love's sure prophecy;
And every wish for better things
An undreamed beauty nearer brings.

"For fate is servitor of love;
Desire and hope and longing prove
The secret of immortal youth,
And Nature cheats us into truth.

"O kind allurers, wisely sent,
Beguiling with benign intent,
Still move us, through divine unrest,
To seek the loveliest and the best!

"Go with us when our souls go free,
And, in the clear, white light to be,
Add unto Heaven's beatitude
The old delight of seeking good!"

JUNE ON THE MERRIMAC.

O DWELLERS in the stately towns,
What come ye out to see?
This common earth, this common sky,
This water flowing free?

As gayly as these kalmia flowers
Your door-yard blossoms spring;
As sweetly as these wild wood birds
Your cagèd minstrels sing.

You find but common bloom and green,
The rippling river's rune,

The beauty which is everywhere
Beneath the skies of June;

The Hawkswood oaks, the storm-torn plumes
Of old pine-forest kings,
Beneath whose century-woven shade
Deer Island's mistress sings.

And here are pictured Artichoke,
And Curson's bowery mill;
And Pleasant Valley smiles between
The river and the hill.

You know full well these banks of bloom,
The upland's wavy line,
And how the sunshine tips with fire
The needles of the pine.

Yet, like some old remembered psalm,
Or sweet, familiar face,
Not less because of commonness
You love the day and place.

And not in vain in this soft air
Shall hard-strung nerves relax,
Not all in vain the o'erworn brain
Forego its daily tax.

The lust of power, the greed of gain
Have all the year their own;
The haunting demons well may let
Our one bright day alone.

Unheeded let the newsboy call,
Aside the ledger lay;

The world will keep its tread-mill step
Though we fall out to-day.

The truants of life's weary school,
Without excuse from thrift
We change for once the gains of toil
For God's unpurchased gift.

From ceilèd rooms, from silent books,
From crowded car and town,
Dear Mother Earth, upon thy lap
We lay our tired heads down.

Cool, summer wind, our heated brows;
Blue river, through the green
Of clustering pines, refresh the eyes
Which all too much have seen.

For us these pleasant woodland ways
Are thronged with memories old,
Have felt the grasp of friendly hands
And heard love's story told.

A sacred presence overbroods
The earth whereon we meet;
These winding forest-paths are trod
By more than mortal feet.

Old friends called from us by the voice
Which they alone could hear,
From mystery to mystery,
From life to life, draw near.

More closely for the sake of them
Each other's hands we press;

Our voices take from them a tone
Of deeper tenderness.

Our joy is theirs, their trust is ours,
Alike below, above,
Or here or there, about us fold
The arms of one great love!

We ask to-day no countersign,
No party names we own;
Unlabeled, individual,
We bring ourselves alone.

What cares the unconventioned wood
For pass-words of the town?
The sound of fashion's shibboleth
The laughing waters drown.

Here cant forgets his dreary tone,
And care his face forlorn;
The liberal air and sunshine laugh
The bigot's zeal to scorn.

From manhood's weary shoulder falls
His load of selfish cares;
And woman takes her rights as flowers
And brooks and birds take theirs.

The license of the happy woods,
The brook's release, are ours;
The freedom of the unshamed wind
Among the glad-eyed flowers.

Yet here no evil thought finds place,
Nor foot profane comes in;

Our grove, like that of Samothrace,
Is set apart from sin.

We walk on holy ground; above
A sky more holy smiles;
The chant of the beatitudes
Swells down these leafy aisles.

Thanks to the gracious Providence
That brings us here once more;
For memories of the good behind
And hopes of good before!

And if, unknown to us, sweet days
Of June like this must come,
Unseen of us these laurels clothe
The river-banks, with bloom;

And these green paths must soon be trod
By other feet than ours,
Full long may annual pilgrims come
To keep the Feast of Flowers;

The matron be a girl once more,
The bearded man a boy,
And we, in heaven's eternal June,
Be glad for earthly joy!

HYMN OF THE DUNKERS.

KLOSTER KEDAR, EPHRATA, PENNSYLVANIA.

1738.

SISTER MARIA CHRISTINA *sings.*

WAKE, sisters, wake! the day-star shines;
Above Ephrata's eastern pines
The dawn is breaking, cool and calm.
Wake, sisters, wake to prayer and psalm!

Praised be the Lord for shade and light,
For toil by day, for rest by night!
Praised be His name who deigns to bless
Our Kedar of the wilderness!—

Our refuge when the spoiler's hand
Was heavy on our native land;

And freedom, to her children due,
The wolf and vulture only knew.

We praised Him when to prison led,
We owned Him when the stake blazed red;
We knew, whatever might befall,
His love and power were over all.

He heard our prayers; with outstretched arm
He led us forth from cruel harm;
Still, wheresoe'er our steps were bent,
His cloud and fire before us went!

The watch of faith and prayer He set,
We kept it then, we keep it yet.
At midnight, crow of cock, or noon,
He cometh sure, He cometh soon.

He comes to chasten, not destroy,
To purge the earth from sin's alloy.
At last, at last shall all confess
His mercy as His righteousness.

The dead shall live, the sick be whole,
The scarlet sin be white as wool;
No discord mar below, above,
The music of eternal love!

Sound, welcome trump, the last alarm!
Lord God of hosts, make bare thine arm,
Fulfill this day our long desire,
Make sweet and clean the world with fire!

Sweep, flaming besom, sweep from sight
The lies of time; be swift to smite,

Sharp sword of God, all idols down,
Genevan creed and Roman crown.

Quake, earth, through all thy zones, till all
The fanes of pride and priestcraft fall;
And lift thou up in place of them
Thy gates of pearl, Jerusalem!

Lo! rising from baptismal flame,
Transfigured, glorious, yet the same,
Within the heavenly city's bound
Our Kloster Kedar shall be found.

He cometh soon! at dawn or noon
Or set of sun, He cometh soon.
Our prayers shall meet Him on his way;
Wake, sisters, wake! arise and pray!

IN THE "OLD SOUTH."

1677.

She came and stood in the Old South Church,
A wonder and a sign,
With a look the old time sibyls wore,
Half-crazed and half-divine.

Save the mournful sackcloth about her wound
Unclothed as the primal mother,
With limbs that trembled and eyes that blazed
With a fire she dared not smother.

Loose on her shoulders fell her hair
With sprinkled ashes gray,

She stood in the broad aisle strange and weird
As a soul at the judgment day.

And the minister paused in his sermon's midst,
And the people held their breath,
For these were the words the maiden spoke
Through lips as pale as death:

"Thus saith the Lord, with equal feet
All men my courts shall tread,
And priest and ruler no more shall eat
My people up like bread!

"Repent! repent! ere the Lord shall speak
In thunder and breaking seals!
Let all souls worship Him in the way
His light within reveals."

She shook the dust from her naked feet,
And her sackcloth closer drew,
And into the porch of the awe-hushed church
She passed like a ghost from view.

They whipped her away at the tail o' the cart
Through half the streets of the town,
But the words she uttered that day nor fire
Could burn nor water drown.

And now the aisles of the ancient church
By equal feet are trod,
And the bell that swings in its belfry rings
Freedom to worship God!

And now whenever a wrong is done
It thrills the conscious walls;

The stone from the basement cries aloud
And the beam from the timber calls.

There are steeple-houses on every hand,
And pulpits that bless and ban,
And the Lord will not grudge the single church
That is set apart for man.

For in two commandments are all the law
And the prophets under the sun,
And the first is last and the last is first,
And the twain are verily one.

So, long as Boston shall Boston be,
And her bay-tides rise and fall,
Shall freedom stand in the Old South Church
And plead for the rights of all!

LEXINGTON.

1775.

No Berserk thirst of blood had they,
No battle-joy was theirs, who set
Against the alien bayonet
Their homespun breasts in that old day.

Their feet had trodden peaceful ways;
They loved not strife, they dreaded pain;
They saw not, what to us is plain,
That God would make man's wrath his praise.

No seers were they, but simple men;
Its vast results the future hid:

The meaning of the work they did
Was strange and dark and doubtful then.

Swift as their summons came they left
The plow mid-furrow standing still,
The half-ground corn grist in the mill,
The spade in earth, the axe in cleft.

They went where duty seemed to call,
They scarcely asked the reason why;
They only knew they could but die,
And death was not the worst of all!

Of man for man the sacrifice,
All that was theirs to give, they gave.
The flowers that blossomed from their grave
Have sown themselves beneath all skies.

Their death-shot shook the feudal tower,
And shattered slavery's chain as well;
On the sky's dome, as on a bell,
Its echo struck the world's great hour.

That fateful echo is not dumb:
The nations listening to its sound
Wait, from a century's vantage-ground,
The holier triumphs yet to come, —

The bridal time of Law and Love,
The gladness of the world's release,
When, war-sick, at the feet of Peace
The hawk shall nestle with the dove! —

The golden age of brotherhood
Unknown to other rivalries

Than of the mild humanities,
And gracious interchange of good,

When closer strand shall lean to strand,
Till meet, beneath saluting flags,
The eagle of our mountain-crags,
The lion of our Motherland!

CENTENNIAL HYMN.

I.

Our fathers' God! from out whose hand
The centuries fall like grains of sand,
We meet to-day, united, free,
And loyal to our land and Thee,
To thank Thee for the era done,
And trust Thee for the opening one.

II.

Here, where of old, by Thy design,
The fathers spake that word of Thine
Whose echo is the glad refrain
Of rended bolt and falling chain,

To grace our festal time, from all
The zones of earth our guests we call.

III.

Be with us while the New World greets
The Old World thronging all its streets,
Unveiling all the triumphs won
By art or toil beneath the sun;
And unto common good ordain
This rivalship of hand and brain.

IV.

Thou, who hast here in concord furled
The war flags of a gathered world,
Beneath our Western skies fulfill
The Orient's mission of good-will,
And, freighted with love's Golden Fleece,
Send back its Argonauts of peace.

V.

For art and labor met in truce,
For beauty made the bride of use,
We thank Thee; but, withal, we crave
The austere virtues strong to save,
The honor proof to place or gold,
The manhood never bought nor sold!

VI.

Oh make Thou us, through centuries long,
In peace secure, in justice strong;
Around our gift of freedom draw
The safeguards of Thy righteous law;
And, cast in some diviner mold,
Let the new cycle shame the old!

THIERS.

I.

FATE summoned, in gray-bearded age, to act
A history stranger than his written fact,
Him who portrayed the splendor and the gloom
Of that great hour when throne and altar fell
With long death-groan which still is audible.
He, when around the walls of Paris rung
The Prussian bugle like the blast of doom,
And every ill which follows unblest war
Maddened all France from Finistère to Var,
The weight of fourscore from his shoulders flung,
And guided Freedom in the path he saw
Lead out of chaos into light and law,

Peace, not imperial, but republican,
And order pledged to all the Rights of Man.

II.

Death called him from a need as imminent
As that from which the Silent William went
When powers of evil, like the smiting seas
On Holland's dikes, assailed her liberties.
Sadly, while yet in doubtful balance hung
The weal and woe of France, the bells were rung
For her lost leader. Paralyzed of will,
Above his bier the hearts of men stood still.
Then, as if set to his dead lips, the horn
Of Roland wound once more to rouse and warn,
The old voice filled the air! His last brave word
Not vainly France to all her boundaries stirred.
Strong as in life, he still for Freedom wrought,
As the dead Cid at red Toloso fought.

FITZ-GREENE HALLECK.

AT THE UNVEILING OF HIS STATUE.

Among their graven shapes to whom
Thy civic wreaths belong,
O city of his love, make room
For one whose gift was song.

Not his the soldier's sword to wield,
Nor his the helm of state,
Nor glory of the stricken field,
Nor triumph of debate.

In common ways, with common men,
He served his race and time

As well as if his clerkly pen
Had never danced to rhyme.

If, in the thronged and noisy mart,
The Muses found their son,
Could any say his tuneful art
A duty left undone?

He toiled and sang; and year by year
Men found their homes more sweet,
And through a tenderer atmosphere
Looked down the brick-walled street.

The Greek's wild onset Wall Street knew;
The Red King walked Broadway;
And Alnwick Castle's roses blew
From Palisades to Bay.

Fair City by the Sea! upraise
His veil with reverent hands;
And mingle with thy own the praise
And pride of other lands.

Let Greece his fiery lyric breathe
Above her hero-urns;
And Scotland, with her holly, wreathe
The flower he culled for Burns.

O, stately stand thy palace walls,
Thy tall ships ride the seas;
To-day thy poet's name recalls
A prouder thought than these.

Not less thy pulse of trade shall beat,
Nor less thy tall fleets swim,

That shaded square and dusty street
Are classic ground through him.

Alive, he loved, like all who sing,
The echoes of his song;
Too late the tardy meed we bring,
The praise delayed so long.

Too late, alas! Of all who knew
The living man, to-day
Before his unveiled face, how few
Make bare their locks of gray!

Our lips of praise must soon be dumb,
Our grateful eyes be dim;
O brothers of the days to come,
Take tender charge of him!

New hands the wires of song may sweep,
  New voices challenge fame ;
But let no moss of years o'ercreep
  The lines of Halleck's name.

WILLIAM FRANCIS BARTLETT.

O, WELL may Essex sit forlorn
  Beside her sea-blown shore;
Her well beloved, her noblest born,
  Is hers in life no more!

No lapse of years can render less
  Her memory's sacred claim;
No fountain of forgetfulness
  Can wet the lips of Fame.

A grief alike to wound and heal,
  A thought to soothe and pain,

The sad, sweet pride that mothers feel
To her must still remain.

Good men and true she has not lacked,
And brave men yet shall be;
The perfect flower, the crowning fact,
Of all her years was he!

As Galahad pure, as Merlin sage,
What worthier knight was found
To grace in Arthur's golden age
The fabled Table Round?

A voice, the battle's trumpet-note,
To welcome and restore;
A hand, that all unwilling smote,
To heal and build once more!

A soul of fire, a tender heart
Too warm for hate, he knew
The generous victor's graceful part
To sheathe the sword he drew.

When Earth, as if on evil dreams,
Looks back upon her wars,
And the white light of Christ outstreams
From the red disk of Mars,

His fame who led the stormy van
Of battle well may cease,
But never that which crowns the man
Whose victory was Peace.

Mourn, Essex, on thy sea-blown shore
Thy beautiful and brave,

Whose failing hand the olive bore,
Whose dying lips forgave!

Let age lament the youthful chief,
And tender eyes be dim;
The tears are more of joy than grief
That fall for one like him!

THE TWO ANGELS.

God called the nearest angels who dwell with
Him above :
The tenderest one was Pity, the dearest one was
Love.

"Arise," He said, "my angels! a wail of woe and
sin
Steals through the gates of heaven, and saddens
all within.

"My harps take up the mournful strain that from
a lost world swells,
The smoke of torment clouds the light and blights
the asphodels.

"Fly downward to that under world, and on its souls of pain
Let Love drop smiles like sunshine, and Pity tears like rain!"

Two faces bowed before the Throne veiled in their golden hair;
Four white wings lessened swiftly down the dark abyss of air.

The way was strange, the flight was long; at last the angels came
Where swung the lost and nether world, red-wrapped in rayless flame.

There Pity, shuddering, wept; but Love, with faith too strong for fear,

Took heart from God's almightiness and smiled a
smile of cheer.

And lo! that tear of Pity quenched the flame
whereon it fell,
And, with the sunshine of that smile, hope en-
tered into hell!

Two unveiled faces full of joy looked upward to
the Throne,
Four white wings folded at the feet of Him who
sat thereon!

And deeper than the sound of seas, more soft than
falling flake,
Amidst the hush of wing and song the Voice
Eternal spake:

"Welcome, my angels! ye have brought a holier
joy to heaven;
Henceforth its sweetest song shall be the song of
sin forgiven!"

THE LIBRARY.

SUNG AT THE OPENING OF THE HAVERHILL LIBRARY.

"LET THERE BE LIGHT!" God spake of old,
And over chaos dark and cold,
And, through the dead and formless frame
Of nature, life and order came.

Faint was the light at first that shone
On giant fern and mastodon,
On half-formed plant and beast of prey,
And man as rude and wild as they.

Age after age, like waves, o'erran
The earth, uplifting brute and man;

And mind, at length, in symbols dark
Its meanings traced on stone and bark.

On leaf of palm, on sedge-wrought roll,
On plastic clay and leathern scroll,
Man wrote his thoughts; the ages passed,
And lo! the Press was found at last!

Then dead souls woke; the thoughts of men
Whose bones were dust revived again;
The cloister's silence found a tongue,
Old prophets spake, old poets sung.

And here, to-day, the dead look down,
The kings of mind again we crown;
We hear the voices lost so long,
The sage's word, the sibyl's song.

Here Greek and Roman find themselves
Alive along these crowded shelves;
And Shakespeare treads again his stage,
And Chaucer paints anew his age.

As if some Pantheon's marbles broke
Their stony trance, and lived and spoke,
Life thrills along the alcoved hall,
The lords of thought await our call!

THE HENCHMAN.

My lady walks her morning round,
My lady's page her fleet greyhound,
My lady's hair the fond winds stir,
And all the birds make songs for her.

Her thrushes sing in Rathburn bowers,
And Rathburn side is gay with flowers;
But ne'er like hers, in flower or bird,
Was beauty seen or music heard.

The distance of the stars is hers;
The least of all her worshipers,
The dust beneath her dainty heel,
She knows not that I see or feel.

O proud and calm! — she cannot know
Where'er she goes with her I go;
O cold and fair! — she cannot guess
I kneel to share her hound's caress!

Gay knights beside her hunt and hawk,
I rob their ears of her sweet talk;
Her suitors come from east and west,
I steal her smiles from every guest.

Unheard of her, in loving words,
I greet her with the song of birds;
I reach her with her green-armed bowers,
I kiss her with the lips of flowers.

The hound and I are on her trail,
The wind and I uplift her veil;

As if the calm, cold moon she were,
And I the tide, I follow her.

As unrebuked as they, I share
The license of the sun and air,
And in a common homage hide
My worship from her scorn and pride.

World-wide apart, and yet so near,
I breathe her charmèd atmosphere,
Wherein to her my service brings
The reverence due to holy things.

Her maiden pride, her haughty name,
My dumb devotion shall not shame;
The love that no return doth crave
To knightly levels lifts the slave.

No lance have I, in joust or fight,
To splinter in my lady's sight;
But, at her feet, how blest were I
For any need of hers to die!

KING SOLOMON AND THE ANTS.

Out from Jerusalem
  The king rode with his great
  War chiefs and lords of state,
And Sheba's queen with them,

Comely, but black withal,
  To whom, perchance, belongs
  That wondrous Song of songs,
Sensuous and mystical,

Whereto devout souls turn
  In fond, ecstatic dream,

And through its earth-born theme
The Love of loves discern.

Proud in the Syrian sun,
In gold and purple sheen,
The dusky Ethiop queen
Smiled on King Solomon.

Wisest of men, he knew
The languages of all
The creatures great or small
That trod the earth or flew.

Across an ant-hill led
The king's path, and he heard
Its small folk, and their word
He thus interpreted :

"Here comes the king men greet
As wise and good and just,
To crush us in the dust
Under his heedless feet."

The great king bowed his head,
And saw the wide surprise
Of the Queen of Sheba's eyes
As he told her what they said.

"O king!" she whispered sweet,
"Too happy fate have they
Who perish in thy way
Beneath thy gracious feet!

"Thou of the God-lent crown,
Shall these vile creatures dare

Murmur against thee where
The knees of kings kneel down?"

"Nay," Solomon replied,
"The wise and strong should seek
The welfare of the weak,"
And turned his horse aside.

His train, with quick alarm,
Curved with their leader round
The ant-hill's peopled mound,
And left it free from harm.

The jeweled head bent low;
"O king!" she said, "henceforth
The secret of thy worth
And wisdom well I know.

"Happy must be the State
Whose ruler heedeth more
The murmurs of the poor
Than flatteries of the great."

RED RIDING-HOOD.

On the wide lawn the snow lay deep,
Ridged o'er with many a drifted heap;
The wind that through the pine-trees sung
The naked elm-boughs tossed and swung;
While, through the window, frosty-starred,
Against the sunset purple barred,
We saw the sombre crow flap by,
The hawk's gray fleck along the sky,
The crested blue-jay flitting swift,
The squirrel poising on the drift,
Erect, alert, his broad gray tail
Set to the north wind like a sail.

It came to pass, our little lass,
With flattened face against the glass,
And eyes in which the tender dew
Of pity shone, stood gazing through
The narrow space her rosy lips
Had melted from the frost's eclipse:
"Oh, see," she cried, "the poor blue-jays!
What is it that the black crow says?
The squirrel lifts his little legs
Because he has no hands, and begs;
He 's asking for my nuts, I know:
May I not feed them on the snow?"

Half lost within her boots, her head
Warm-sheltered in her hood of red,
Her plaid skirt close about her drawn,
She floundered down the wintry lawn;

Now struggling through the misty veil
Blown round her by the shrieking gale;
Now sinking in a drift so low
Her scarlet hood could scarcely show
Its dash of color on the snow.

She dropped for bird and beast forlorn
Her little store of nuts and corn,
And thus her timid guests bespoke:
"Come, squirrel, from your hollow oak,—
Come, black old crow,—come, poor blue-jay,
Before your supper's blown away!
Don't be afraid, we all are good;
And I 'm mamma's Red Riding-Hood!"

O Thou whose care is over all,
Who heedest even the sparrow's fall,

Keep in the little maiden's breast
The pity which is now its guest!
Let not her cultured years make less
The childhood charm of tenderness,
But let her feel as well as know,
Nor harder with her polish grow!
Unmoved by sentimental grief
That wails along some printed leaf,
But, prompt with kindly word and deed
To own the claims of all who need,
Let the grown woman's self make good
The promise of Red Riding-Hood!

THE PRESSED GENTIAN.

THE time of gifts has come again,
And, on my northern window-pane,
Outlined against the day's brief light,
A Christmas token hangs in sight.
The wayside travelers, as they pass,
Mark the gray disk of clouded glass;
And the dull blankness seems, perchance,
Folly to their wise ignorance.

They cannot from their outlook see
The perfect grace it hath for me;
For there the flower, whose fringes through
The frosty breath of autumn blew,

Turns from without its face of bloom
To the warm tropic of my room,
As fair as when beside its brook
The hue of bending skies it took.

So, from the trodden ways of earth,
Seem some sweet souls who veil their worth,
And offer to the careless glance
The clouding gray of circumstance.
They blossom best where hearth-fires burn,
To loving eyes alone they turn
The flowers of inward grace, that hide
Their beauty from the world outside.

But deeper meanings come to me,
My half-immortal flower, from thee!

Man judges from a partial view,
None ever yet his brother knew;
The Eternal Eye that sees the whole
May better read the darkened soul,
And find, to outward sense denied,
The flower upon its inmost side!

OVERRULED.

THE threads our hands in blindness spin
No self-determined plan weaves in;
The shuttle of the unseen powers
Works out a pattern not as ours.

Ah! small the choice of him who sings
What sound shall leave the smitten strings;
Fate holds and guides the hand of art;
The singer's is the servant's part.

The wind-harp chooses not the tone
That through its trembling threads is blown;

The patient organ cannot guess
What hand its passive keys shall press.

Through wish, resolve, and act, our will
Is moved by undreamed forces still;
And no man measures in advance
His strength with untried circumstance.

As streams take hue from shade and sun,
As runs the life the song must run;
But, glad or sad, to his good end
God grant the varying notes may tend!

HYMN.

SUNG AT THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHILDREN'S MISSION, BOSTON, 1878.

THINE are all the gifts, O God!
Thine the broken bread;
Let the naked feet be shod,
And the starving fed.

Let Thy children, by Thy grace,
Give as they abound,
Till the poor have breathing-space,
And the lost are found.

Wiser than the miser's hoards
Is the giver's choice;

Sweeter than the song of birds
Is the thankful voice.

Welcome smiles on faces sad
As the flowers of spring;
Let the tender hearts be glad
With the joy they bring.

Happier for their pity's sake
Make their sports and plays,
And from lips of childhood take
Thy perfected praise!

GIVING AND TAKING.[1]

Who gives and hides the giving hand,
Nor counts on favor, fame, or praise,
Shall find his smallest gift outweighs
The burden of the sea and land.

Who gives to whom hath naught been given,
His gift in need, though small indeed
As is the grass-blade's wind-blown seed,
Is large as earth and rich as heaven.

Forget it not, O man, to whom
A gift shall fall, while yet on earth ;

[1] I have attempted to put in English verse a prose translation of a poem by Tinnevaluva, a Hindoo poet of the third century of our era.

Yea, even to thy seven-fold birth
Recall it in the lives to come.

Who broods above a wrong in thought
Sins much; but greater sin is his
Who, fed and clothed with kindnesses,
Shall count the holy alms as nought.

Who dares to curse the hands that bless
Shall know of sin the deadliest cost;
The patience of the heavens is lost
Beholding man's unthankfulness.

For he who breaks all laws may still
In Sivam's mercy be forgiven;
But none can save, in earth or heaven,
The wretch who answers good with ill.

"I WAS A STRANGER, AND YE TOOK ME IN."

'Neath skies that winter never knew
The air was full of light and balm,
And warm and soft the Gulf wind blew
Through orange bloom and groves of palm.

A stranger from the frozen North,
Who sought the fount of health in vain,
Sank homeless on the alien earth,
And breathed the languid air with pain.

God's angel came! The tender shade
Of pity made her blue eye dim;

Against her woman's breast she laid
The drooping, fainting head of him.

She bore him to a pleasant room,
Flower-sweet and cool with salt sea air,
And watched beside his bed, for whom
His far-off sisters might not care.

She fanned his feverish brow and smoothed
Its lines of pain with tenderest touch.
With holy hymn and prayer she soothed
The trembling soul that feared so much.

Through her the peace that passeth sight
Came to him, as he lapsed away
As one whose troubled dreams of night
Slide slowly into tranquil day.

The sweetness of the Land of Flowers
Upon his lonely grave she laid:
The jasmine dropped its golden showers,
The orange lent its bloom and shade.

And something whispered in her thought,
More sweet than mortal voices be:
"The service thou for him hast wrought
O daughter! hath been done for me."

AT SCHOOL-CLOSE.

BOWDOIN STREET, 1877.

THE end has come, as come it must
To all things; in these sweet June days
The teacher and the scholar trust
Their parting feet to separate ways.

They part: but in the years to be
Shall pleasant memories cling to each,
As shells bear inland from the sea
The murmur of the rhythmic beach.

One knew the joy the sculptor knows
When, plastic to his lightest touch,

His clay-wrought model slowly grows
To that fine grace desired so much.

So daily grew before her eyes
The living shapes whereon she wrought,
Strong, tender, innocently wise,
The child's heart with the woman's thought.

And one shall never quite forget
The voice that called from dream and play,
The firm but kindly hand that set
Her feet in learning's pleasant way, —

The joy of Undine soul-possessed,
The wakening sense, the strange delight
That swelled the fabled statue's breast
And filled its clouded eyes with sight!

O Youth and Beauty, loved of all!
Ye pass from girlhood's gate of dreams;
In broader ways your footsteps fall,
Ye test the truth of all that seems.

Her little realm the teacher leaves,
She breaks her wand of power apart,
While, for your love and trust, she gives
The warm thanks of a grateful heart.

Hers is the sober summer noon
Contrasted with your morn of spring;
The waning with the waxing moon,
The folded with the outspread wing.

Across the distance of the years
She sends her God-speed back to you;

She has no thought of doubts or fears:
Be but yourselves, be pure, be true,

And prompt in duty; heed the deep,
Low voice of conscience; through the ill
And discord round about you, keep
Your faith in human nature still.

Be gentle: unto griefs and needs,
Be pitiful as woman should,
And, spite of all the lies of creeds,
Hold fast the truth that God is good.

Give and receive; go forth and bless
The world that needs the hand and heart
Of Martha's helpful carefulness
No less than Mary's better part.

So shall the stream of time flow by
And leave each year a richer good,
And matron loveliness outvie
The nameless charm of maidenhood.

And, when the world shall link your names
With gracious lives and manners fine,
The teacher shall assert her claims,
And proudly whisper, "These were mine!"

AT EVENTIDE.

Poor and inadequate the shadow-play
Of gain and loss, of waking and of dream,
Against life's solemn background needs must seem
At this late hour. Yet, not unthankfully,
I call to mind the fountains by the way,
The breath of flowers, the bird-song on the spray,
Dear friends, sweet human loves, the joy of giving
And of receiving, the great boon of living
In grand historic years when Liberty
Had need of word and work, quick sympathies
For all who fail and suffer, song's relief,
Nature's uncloying loveliness; and chief,

The kind restraining hand of Providence,
The inward witness, the assuring sense
Of an Eternal Good which overlies
The sorrow of the world, Love which outlives
All sin and wrong, Compassion which forgives
To the uttermost, and Justice whose clear eyes
Through lapse and failure look to the intent,
And judge our frailty by the life we meant.

THE PROBLEM.

I.

Not without envy Wealth at times must look
On their brown strength who wield the reaping-hook
And scythe, or, at the forge-fire shape the plow
Or the steel harness of the steeds of steam; —
All who, by skill and patience, anyhow
Make service noble, and the earth redeem
From savageness. By kingly accolade
Than theirs was never worthier knighthood made.
Well for them, if, while demagogues their vain
And evil counsels proffer, they maintain

Their honest manhood unseduced, and wage
No war with Labor's right to Labor's gain
Of sweet home-comfort, rest of hand and brain,
And softer pillow for the head of Age.

II.

And well for Gain if it ungrudging yields
Labor its just demand; and well for Ease
If in the uses of its own, it sees
No wrong to him who tills its pleasant fields
And spreads the table of its luxuries.
The interests of the rich man and the poor
Are one and same, inseparable evermore;
And, when scant wage or labor fail to give
Food, shelter, raiment, wherewithal to live,
Need has its rights, necessity its claim.
Yea, even self-wrought misery and shame

Test well the charity suffering long and kind.
The home-pressed question of the age can find
No answer in the catch-words of the blind
Leaders of blind. Solution there is none
Save in the Golden Rule of Christ alone.

RESPONSE.

1877.

Beside that milestone where the level sun,
Nigh unto setting, sheds his last, low rays
On word and work irrevocably done,
Life's blending threads of good and ill outspun,
I hear, O friends! your words of cheer and praise,
Half doubtful if myself or otherwise.
Like him who, in the old Arabian joke,
A beggar slept and crownèd Caliph woke.
Thanks not the less. With not unglad surprise
I see my life-work through your partial eyes;

Assured, in giving to my home-taught songs
A higher value than of right belongs,
You do but read between the written lines
The finer grace of unfulfilled designs.

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